

Minutes of Parks Advisory Committee special meeting of July 23, 2008

Acting Secretary – Cindy Weiss

Present: Sue Harrington, Jean Haskell, Ethan Avery, Cindy Weiss, Eric Kruger, Michelle Baughman, and Jennifer Kaufman, parks coordinator

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m.

New Business

1. Planning and Zoning Commission (7/9/08) and Town Council (7/3/08) referrals: White Oak Condominiums proposed sewage disposal system on town land

PAC members reviewed the background of the purchases that made up the Dunhamtown Forest property. The Sibley property was bought in 2002 and it provided access to Dunhamtown Forest (DF) from White Oak Road. A parking lot and trailhead were added.

Jean Haskell suggested that the PAC should focus its comments on DF as the PAC's management responsibility. The White Oak sewage disposal project will impact the trailhead and parking lot for DF. The PAC's responsibility is to protect DF, and a septic system should not be part of a natural area. The Sibley property, where the White Oak sewage disposal project is proposed, has not been included in the DF management plan to date. Michelle Baughman pointed out that it is shown on town park maps as part of DF. Members discussed the parking area, which is on the Sibley property, and how the town should negotiate with the White Oak Condominiums for any upgrades to the parking area that it might require if WOCA is permitted to lease Sibley property land for sewage disposal.

Members discussed how management of the property would be handled if it were removed from DF and what would happen to the White Oak trailhead and parking access.

Sue Harrington said she tends to agree with the Conservation Commission's position that some sort of conservation requirement would be reasonable, perhaps including a contribution by the White Oak Condominium Association to the town for open space elsewhere.

Jean Haskell noted that the PAC can avoid all of these issues, which are not part of the PAC's management charge, if it takes the position that the use of the Sibley property has not yet been determined. After the town decides what to do with the Sibley property regarding the White Oak disposal plan, the PAC would then consider how to manage the property and add it to DF management plan. The management plan would cover whether the Sibley property is the entry to DF.

Concern was raised about hiking hazards in DF when construction is underway. WOCA would get a construction easement and assume liability. PAC would erect Do Not Enter signs and notify the public that the White Oak Road entrance to DF is closed.

Discussion concerned proposed wording for a response to the PZC and Town Council. The consensus was that removing from DF the 16.5 acre section of the Sibley property that would be used by White Oak is a good idea, leaving it to the town, and putting the remaining 34 acres of the Sibley property into the DF management plan. The parking area will not be included in the DF management plan. This would be similar to the way that the parking lots at the Animal Pound and Middle School are not part of Schoolhouse Brook Park. This would remove the septic project from DF.

A motion was made by Michelle Baughman and seconded by Cindy Weiss and approved to send the following recommendation to the PZC and Town Council:

The existing Dunhamtown Forest -White Oak Road trailhead and parking lot will be adversely impacted by the proposed sewage disposal plan. The Dunhamtown Forest trailhead and parking area will be reconsidered in an amended Dunhamtown Forest land management plan. The management plan will suggest a new boundary delineation around the White Oak septic easement.

The PAC suggests that the 16.5 acre portion of the Sibley property that is in question not be included as part of Dunhamtown Forest but be given a separate designation as town land abutting the forest, similar to the way that the Animal Pound and Middle School are town lands adjacent to Schoolhouse Brook Park. This town land would include the parking area off White Oak Road. As the PAC updates the Dunhamtown Forest management plan, it will add the remaining portion of the Sibley property to the plan, minus the parking lot.

2. The PAC considered the PZC's referral of a subdivision on Stafford Road and Browns Road, file #1274

Stafford Road subdivision:

Discussion of this three-lot subdivision plan concerned driveway placements, the impact on wetlands, and the four acres out of 13 that would go to the town for open space.

Jean Haskell read the guidelines for the PAC to use in reviewing PZC files.

The following recommendation to the PZC, moved by Michelle Baughman and seconded by Eric Kruger was approved by the PAC:

The Parks Advisory Commission finds this is a positive addition to the town's open space program. The PAC suggests that it be managed by the Board of Education as an enhancement to the Annie Vinton School management area.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.